



Make the Road New York Testimony
New York Redistricting Commission
Submitted in writing regarding Westchester County

I write this body as the Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York, the largest grassroots organization of immigrants and working-class people of color in New York. We operate community centers in Brentwood, Long Island; Jackson Heights, Queens; Bushwick, Brooklyn; Port Richmond, Staten Island; and White Plains, Westchester. Our 24,000 members build the power of our communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. I submit this testimony to share the organization's perspective on redistricting.

Increasing civic engagement is a critical part of our work. We conduct outreach continuously to ensure community members' voices are heard. In last year's census, we led in-person, phone, and digital outreach that reached hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Our members participated in that process to make certain that our communities receive both adequate resources *and representation*. Now, to achieve such representation, we need a redistricting process that is transparent, fair, and reflects the geographic realities and growing numbers of our communities.

During the first round of hearings, we presented several priorities for this process, rooted in federal standards, widely-accepted best practices, *and* our experience in the state's last round of redistricting. Particularly in the last State Senate map, communities of color were effectively disenfranchised--both through "cracking" on Long Island and through high population deviations that concentrated more voters in New York City communities with high Black, brown, and immigrant populations. Our members and allies organized to stop this injustice, but those in power ignored us.

We are deeply disappointed in the failure of the commission to produce a single set of maps. This failure has left us with little confidence that the IRC will produce a final single set of maps, which would render the commission an abject failure and signal the need for future redistricting reform. Despite our warranted pessimism about this process, we continue to urge this body to ensure that people of color are represented in the process by:

1. Respecting one person, one vote;
2. Refraining from abusive line-drawing, especially "cracking" and "packing";
3. Respecting political subdivisions and communities of interest, especially for long-underrepresented immigrant, Black, and brown communities;

BROOKLYN 301 GROVE STREET BROOKLYN, NY 11237 718 418 7690	QUEENS 92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372 718 565 8500	STATEN ISLAND 161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302 718 727 1222	LONG ISLAND 1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE BRENTWOOD, NY 11717 631 231 2220	WESTCHESTER 46 WALLER AVENUE WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605 914 948 8466
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4. Ensuring compactness and contiguity; and
5. Prioritizing public participation and transparency.

We also urge the Commission to deliver the representation that the growing Latinx community merits. Our community has grown by more than 30% in Westchester over the past ten years. We deserve more representation.

As it relates to the proposed maps for Westchester, we are particularly focused on White Plains, where the largest concentration of our members live and where we operate a community center. White Plains should remain whole and should be connected to other communities of color in southern Westchester County. The State Senate “cracking” of White Plains was particularly problematic for our community in the last round of redistricting. In this round, both the Letters and Names Senate plans keep White Plains in tact, but the Names proposal is inferior because it dilutes communities of color by putting White Plains together with too many overwhelmingly white areas in the vicinity.

In addition, for Congressional District 16, we have heard and support testimony from many of our neighbors about the strong connections between communities in the Bronx and southern Westchester.

We urge you to take seriously the input of community members and organizations--especially those in historically underrepresented communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at theo.oshiro@maketheroadny.org if you have any questions.